



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

19th District News

Autumn 2001



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Dear Friends:

The 2002 Legislative Session starts in just a few months.

In mid-January, we will have a more focused picture of our state and national economy – not to mention a more focused picture of other concerns for South-west Washington, and for the rest of our state, nation, and world. We will send you an up-to-date newsletter very early next year to talk in greater detail about what we see happening in the session.

However, we think that right now, today, is a very appropriate time to touch bases with you and our other neighbors.

It is our responsibility to distribute regular issues of *19th District News*. This journal is one of the main ways we keep citizens informed of state-government and related topics. Today, we want to address a few of the most important matters unfolding since your Summer 2001 newsletter shared news on this year's legislative session.

Please stay in touch with us. **Your letters, phone calls, e-mails, and personal visits are always welcome. In fact, we couldn't do this job without the citizen-participation for which South-west Washington has become famous!**

Best wishes,

Brian Hatfield
State Representative
19th Legislative District

Mark Doumit
State Representative
19th Legislative District

❖ **Primaries:**

Choice and privacy foremost as election conundrum continues

The word “tradition” means different things to different people. Families have traditions, of course, and towns and neighborhoods have theirs. Companies, too, have time-tested ways of doing things that they’re proud to call traditions.

When it comes to voting here in the Pacific Northwest, choice and privacy stand out as Washington traditions. Do you want someone telling you for whom you can and cannot vote? Whether it’s the primary or the general election, you probably wouldn’t like it much at all. And you shouldn’t.

Keep in mind, however, what happened to California’s blanket-primary-election system last year. (For about seven decades, a similar system has guaranteed choice and privacy in our primary elections in Washington.) Their system was given the boot by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Our own blanket primary is under attack from the major political parties.

They say the current system tramples their “right of association.” They say it ruins their right to use the primary to choose their candidates to run in the general election.

“A voter shouldn’t be able to vote for a Democrat, or a Republican, or a Whatever in the primary election,” the big parties say, “unless that voter has identified himself or herself as a Democrat, or a Republican, or a Whatever.”

The Legislature spent all last session working to find a compromise on this issue.

There’s got to be a happy medium, we believed then, between meeting the U.S. Supreme Court standard and retaining our open-primary system – keeping our tradition of choice and privacy.

We still believe there’s got to be a happy medium.

A federal judge a few months ago passed the ball right back to the Legislature’s court. **And so this work will go on in the 2002 Legislative Session.**



The growing number of students is one factor demanding careful consideration of potential budget cuts.

❖ **State budget:**

A tough economic tack for a tough economic strait

Washington’s coastal families and the other families who live near the Coast know all about tough economies.

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Our citizens and businesses in Grays Harbor County, Pacific County, Cowlitz County, and Wahkiakum County could write a book on it. **Well, these days the economy in the whole state of Washington and in most other parts of the country isn't doing so well – even the fairly brawny economy in Puget Sound and some other high-tech regions of our nation.**

The announced layoffs of many thousands of Boeing employees will send a ripple effect rolling across the rest of the state. **In turn, we'll have fewer and fewer dollars to pay for schools, for public health and safety, for roads and highways, and for other citizen programs. Local towns and local counties are particularly hard-hit.** People who rely on efficient, dependable bus services, for instance, as well as immunizations and other health-clinic-type programs will have to make-do – or go without.

❖ *Revenue down, citizen-needs up*

According to the most recent state forecast, we will receive at least \$200 million less in revenue to pay for programs and services in the current biennial budget. Fifty-six percent of the general fund is based on revenue from the sales tax. **So when consumer-confidence and spending go down, fewer dollars are available to pay for programs that most citizens say they want.** (The next revenue forecast is scheduled to come out shortly.)

Unfortunately, citizen-needs are up – way up, in some cases:

- Higher enrollment in our schools is expected to cost an extra \$20 million more than we anticipated earlier this year.

- A larger population in our correctional facilities is expected to cost an extra \$25 million.

- Medical-assistance for people in need is expected to cost between \$50 million and \$100 million above what we thought it would.

Any citizen-approved initiatives this year – tacked on to initiatives approved in recent years – will further complicate the budget picture. **(While Initiative No. 1 can call for increased spending, paradoxically, Initiative No. 2 can cut into the funds available for all programs – including the very area in which Initiative No. 1 directs that more money must be spent!)**

It's all about balance, isn't it?

We must balance a fair, legitimate and reasonable need with and against, say, a need for investment in public-safety and emergency-protection such as police, sheriff, and fire departments. (Speaking of balance, by the way: One thing we do assure you is that, as required in state law, we will keep the state budget in balance!) As the Democratic vice chair of the House Appropriations Committee, Mark will be very involved in crafting a fair decision and creating a fair balance.

Leadership is fundamental.

And by leadership, we mean the will to confront and make difficult decisions. This is exactly what's called for in tough economic times – no less than in times of tragic national events.

As we said earlier, we'll talk more in a future issue of *19th District News* about what's in store for this pivotal budget discussion in the 2002 Legislative Session.

❖ Credit-scoring:

Move is afoot to champion justness for insurance-consumers

The House Financial Institutions & Insurance Committee that Brian co-chairs is taking a very interested look at the way some insurance companies use credit-scoring to decide how much to charge for an insurance policy.

Some companies say they need this tool to make their underwriting decisions. (It's been reported that nearly 90 percent of

But we have a problem if this credit information is abused – either by the companies or by someone else. Right now, our state isn't regulating this use of a person's credit score. One other state (California) has established a disclosure provision so consumers can at least have some idea about what's going on.

❖ *Hearing from every side*

Before the 2002 session, we'll talk with consumers and with the insurance industry to find out what rules, if any, we should set up to make sure the rights of Washington citizens aren't being chivvied.



The 2002 Legislative Session, no less than previous meetings, will address a big variety of responsibilities.

We want to find answers to these sorts of questions:

- How often and in what avenues are insurance companies using credit-scoring – and in what ways, if any, does this practice hurt consumers?
- How can this practice best serve consumers, as well as businesses here in our state?
- How should our state change the way things are done now to provide more information to help insurance-consumers make informed choices?

❖ Shorelines:

Agency's ideas for new guidelines are detained

vehicle-insurance firms use credit-scoring!) Companies maintain that there is a specific correlation between a person's credit score and the likelihood that the person will be in an accident.

This past August, the Department of Ecology's (DOE) shoreline-protection plan was reined in – at least for the time being – by the Shorelines Hearings Board.

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The board sent the new rules back to the department. In so doing, the board said the agency exceeded its authority in the state Shoreline Management Act with these new ideas for implementing the federal Endan-

for failing to provide enough public notice, for failing to secure enough public comment, and for failing to analyze enough the potential impacts on small businesses. Yes: This is definitely a reminder for the department to be more realistic – and to be more reasonable.

The governor and the department have agreed to sit down with representatives from the business community, landowners, and local governments to negotiate more reasonable rules.

❖ One country:

Unbelief, horror, anger – yes. But bigotry is anti-American, too

Someone's dad or mom, and someone else's son or daughter. One person's brother, and another's sister. Young people, and people not so young.

Six thousand human beings – men and women from the United States mostly; but men and women, too, from more than 70 other countries – were killed one recent and terrible day in New York City, in Washington, D.C., and in Pennsylvania. Since September 11, Americans for the most part have put aside our relatively minor differences and become more united than ever.

For good reason, we unite behind our country's president – and behind our country's military personnel who put their very lives on the line for our freedoms. But as we rally in this support, let us please remember the president's own



Citizens, businesses and local governments will have a great deal of input in helping shape future shoreline-management ideas.

gered Species Act. We believe this well-reasoned decision of the Shorelines Hearings Board gets local governments off the hook – for now, anyway – from having to implement the department's unfair new rules.

Frankly, that's exactly what we've maintained all along. We've emphasized that no state agency – not the Department of Ecology and not anyone else – has a right to impose rules that threaten communities, very much including our rural communities in Southwest Washington.

The board's decision chastises the DOE plan

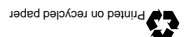
counsel: These messengers of madness and hatred who attacked civilization don't reflect Islam or the Arab world any more than a kazoo reflects the symphony.

Both of us as family men can imagine what it's like for our fellow citizens who have lost loved ones in the assaults. We pray that out of the ashes of this terrible act of violence, people of the whole world can somehow become – and remain – united. As we work today to make a safer world for everyone, we pray that no one ever again will have to endure terrorism of any kind.



*Tragedy on a
horrific scale has
united our
nation behind
symbols and em-
blems of our
shared history.*

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